

Participation in adult education

In an age of rapid technological and economic change, lifelong learning is essential, both for individuals and for society as a whole. Adult education provides an avenue for acquiring new knowledge and upgrading workers' skills. Differences in participation rates among various groups may indicate the degree of access to or the rewards of participation for these individuals.

- Forty percent of adults participated in adult education activities in 1995, up from 32 percent in 1991. Of those adults who participated in 1995, about half (21 percent) took work-related courses, half (20 percent) took personal development courses, and 6 percent took part-time courses related to a diploma, degree, or certification.
- In both 1991 and 1995, adults with more education generally were more likely to participate in adult education activities than those with less education. In 1995, almost 6 in 10 adults who had a bachelor's degree or higher participated in adult education, compared to 3 in 10 adults who had a high school diploma or GED.
- Employed adults were more likely to participate in adult education than those without jobs. In 1995, among those who were employed, participation rates of females were 9 percentage points higher than those of their male counterparts. Moreover, employed females were more likely than employed males to take work-related or personal development courses (see supplemental table 13-1).
- Among those who participated in work-related courses, the majority (60 percent) took courses provided by business or professional associations. In 1995, about 20 percent took work-related courses provided by colleges, and 17 percent took work-related courses provided by government agencies in 1995 (see supplemental table 13-2).

Adult education¹ participation rates in the past 12 months, by type of adult education activity, educational attainment, and labor force status: 1991 and 1995

Educational attainment and labor force status	1991 total	1995				
		Type of adult education activity				
		Total ²	Basic skills ³	Credential ²	Work-related	Personal development
Total	31.6	40.2	1.2	6.1	20.9	19.9
Educational attainment						
Grades 9–12 ⁴	14.3	22.9	5.6	1.6	6.9	10.4
High school diploma or GED	22.5	30.9	0.8	3.5	14.2	15.7
Vocational/technical school	31.7	41.9	0.6	5.4	21.9	21.1
Some college	39.4	49.3	0.5	12.1	22.3	25.3
Associate degree	49.1	56.1	0.4	10.9	32.1	27.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	52.2	58.2	—	7.7	37.9	27.9
Labor force status						
Employed	40.8	50.7	1.1	8.2	31.1	22.0
Unemployed	27.5	36.6	5.0	5.5	11.1	17.4
Not in labor force	14.5	21.3	0.9	2.2	3.4	16.2

— Not applicable.

¹ Adult education includes educational programs at all levels. See the glossary for the definition of adult education.

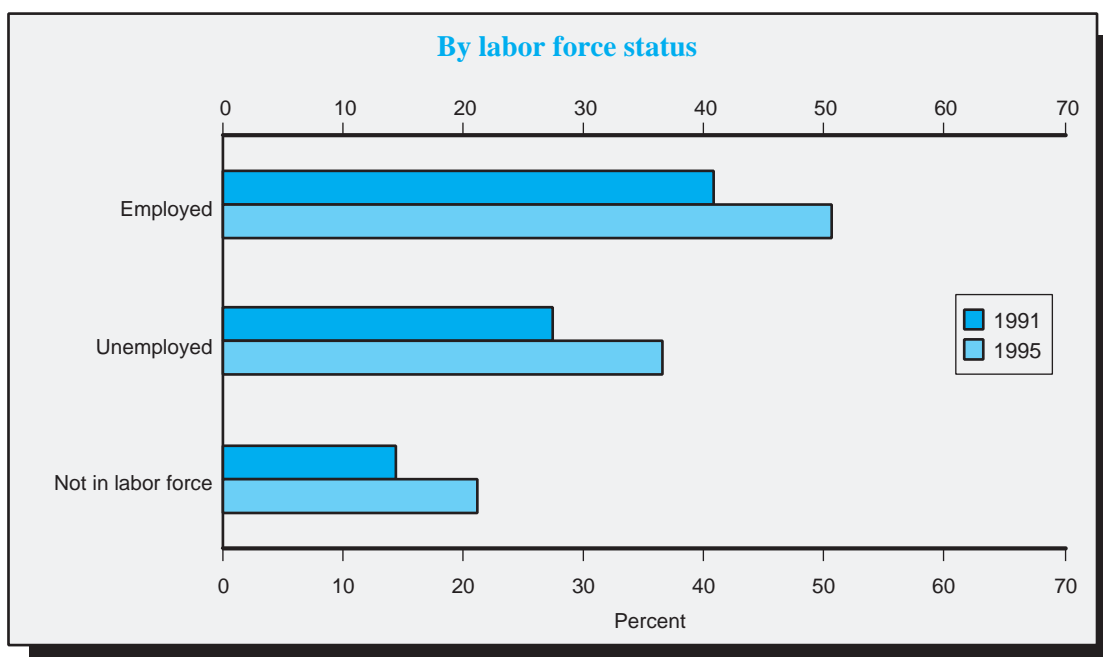
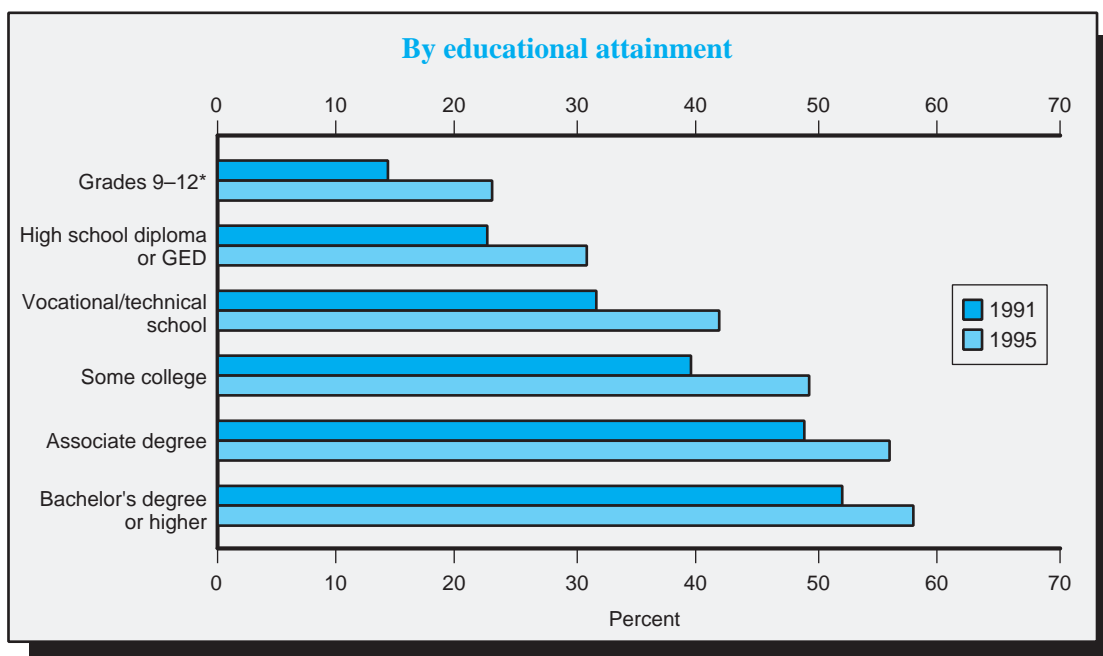
² The participation rate of adults age 17 or older was determined by their involvement in one or more of six types of adult education activities in the 12 months prior to the interview; therefore, percentages may not add to totals because people participated in more than one type of activity (9 percent in 1995). Adults who participated in apprenticeship programs and English as a Second Language programs were included in the total, but are not shown separately. Adults who reported that they had participated only as full-time credential seekers were not included in the calculation of the participation rates.

³ Only adults who had not received a high school diploma or its equivalent, who had received a high school diploma in the past 12 months, or who had received a high school diploma in a foreign country were asked about their participation in the basic education/General Educational Development (GED) activities.

⁴ In 1995, includes adults whose highest education level was grades 9–12 who had not received a high school diploma; in 1991, includes only adults whose highest education level was grades 9–11.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 and 1995 (Adult Education Component).

Adult education participation rates in the past 12 months: 1991 and 1995



* In 1995, includes adults whose highest education level was grades 9–12 who had not received a high school diploma; in 1991, includes only adults whose highest education level was grades 9–11.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 and 1995 (Adult Education Component).

Table 13-1 Adult education¹ participation rates in the past 12 months, by type of adult education activity, educational attainment, labor force status, race/ethnicity, age, and sex: 1995

Selected characteristics	Total ²	Type of adult education activity			
		Basic skills ³	Credential ²	Work-related	Personal development
Male and female					
Total	40.2	1.2	6.1	20.9	19.9
Educational attainment					
Grades 9–12 ⁴	22.9	5.6	1.6	6.9	10.4
High school diploma or GED	30.9	0.8	3.5	14.2	15.7
Vocational/technical school	41.9	0.6	5.4	21.9	21.1
Some college	49.3	0.5	12.1	22.3	25.3
Associate degree	56.1	0.4	10.9	32.1	27.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	58.2	—	7.7	37.9	27.9
Labor force status					
Employed	50.7	1.1	8.2	31.1	22.0
Unemployed	36.6	5.0	5.5	11.1	17.4
Not in labor force	21.3	0.9	2.2	3.4	16.2
Race/ethnicity					
White	41.5	0.7	6.0	22.8	20.8
Black	37.0	2.3	7.3	16.2	18.9
Hispanic	33.7	3.6	4.8	11.8	13.8
Age					
17–24	47.0	4.6	12.6	14.7	21.5
25–34	48.4	1.2	9.4	25.8	22.2
35–44	49.2	1.1	7.3	30.1	22.8
45–54	45.9	0.6	4.9	29.7	20.5
55–64	28.0	0.2	1.1	14.2	16.3
65 and older	15.2	⁵ 0.0	0.2	2.3	13.5
Male					
Total	38.2	1.2	5.6	21.8	15.8
Educational attainment					
Grades 9–12 ⁴	25.0	5.9	2.4	7.9	9.6
High school diploma or GED	27.4	0.8	3.7	14.4	11.2
Vocational/technical school	39.8	1.1	5.3	22.2	14.6
Some college	44.8	0.5	10.2	22.2	19.8
Associate degree	52.3	0.4	11.5	31.7	21.5
Bachelor's degree or higher	54.7	—	6.4	37.6	22.6
Labor force status					
Employed	46.5	1.1	7.0	29.0	17.9
Unemployed	33.3	4.7	3.9	11.3	14.6
Not in labor force	16.3	0.8	2.1	3.7	10.5
Race/ethnicity					
White	39.1	0.7	5.4	23.8	16.2
Black	34.9	1.6	7.6	15.4	17.1
Hispanic	34.5	4.5	4.1	13.0	11.5
Age					
17–24	46.1	5.2	10.9	14.9	18.9
25–34	46.1	1.1	9.0	26.7	17.4
35–44	47.1	0.9	6.5	30.7	18.3
45–54	41.8	0.5	3.9	29.0	15.8
55–64	24.7	⁵ 0.0	1.2	14.3	12.7
65 and older	11.9	⁵ 0.0	0.2	2.9	9.4

Table 13-1 **Adult education¹ participation rates in the past 12 months, by type of adult education activity, educational attainment, labor force status, race/ethnicity, age, and sex: 1995—Continued**

Selected characteristics	Total ²	Type of adult education activity			
		Basic skills ³	Credential ²	Work-related	Personal development
Total	42.1	1.2	6.5	20.2	23.5
Educational attainment					
Grades 9–12 ⁴	21.2	5.4	1.1	6.0	11.1
High school diploma or GED	33.7	0.7	3.4	13.9	19.4
Vocational/technical school	43.0	0.3	5.5	21.6	24.8
Some college	53.2	0.5	13.7	22.4	30.0
Associate degree	59.7	0.3	10.4	32.4	32.8
Bachelor's degree or higher	62.4	—	9.3	38.3	34.1
Labor force status					
Employed	55.6	1.1	9.7	33.4	26.8
Unemployed	39.9	5.2	7.0	10.9	20.1
Not in labor force	24.2	0.9	2.3	3.2	19.4
Race/ethnicity					
White	43.8	0.7	6.6	21.9	25.1
Black	38.4	2.7	7.1	16.7	20.1
Hispanic	32.8	2.8	5.4	10.6	15.9
Age					
17–24	48.0	4.1	14.3	14.4	24.0
25–34	50.4	1.3	9.7	25.1	26.5
35–44	51.3	1.3	8.1	29.4	27.3
45–54	49.9	0.6	5.9	30.4	25.1
55–64	31.1	0.4	1.1	14.2	19.5
65 and older	17.6	⁵ 0.0	0.1	1.8	16.4

— Not applicable.

¹ Adult education includes educational programs at all levels. See the glossary for the definition of adult education.

² The participation rate of adults age 17 or older was determined by their involvement in one or more of six types of adult education activities in the 12 months prior to the interview; therefore, percentages may not add to totals because people participated in more than one type of activity (9 percent). Adults who participated in apprenticeship programs and English as a Second Language programs were included in the total, but are not shown separately. Adults who reported that they had participated only as full-time credential seekers were not included in the calculation of the participation rates.

³ Only adults who had not received a high school diploma or its equivalent, who had received a high school diploma in the past 12 months, or who had received a high school diploma in a foreign country were asked about their participation in the basic education/General Educational Development (GED) activities.

⁴ Includes adults whose highest education level was grades 9–12 who had not received a high school diploma.

⁵ Percents less than 0.05 are rounded to 0.0.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1995 (Adult Education Component).

Table 13-2 Percentage of adults taking one or more work-related courses, by type of provider, educational attainment, labor force status, race/ethnicity, and age: 1995

Characteristics	Type of provider for work-related adult education activities						
	Elementary/ secondary	Post- secondary	Trade organization	Private	Business	Government	Other
Total	4.3	20.4	11.1	6.6	59.6	17.3	2.5
Educational attainment							
Grades 9–12*	5.1	15.8	8.0	4.4	61.8	13.3	1.8
High school diploma or GED	3.6	13.5	9.0	6.0	62.4	17.2	2.5
Vocational/technical school	1.0	19.0	13.4	4.1	67.5	9.5	2.8
Some college	2.1	18.6	10.9	7.1	58.2	18.9	2.3
Associate degree	1.3	18.4	18.8	5.0	57.7	17.7	1.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	6.3	25.4	10.8	7.4	58.4	17.7	2.6
Labor force status							
Employed	4.4	20.1	10.9	6.4	60.7	17.4	2.4
Unemployed	2.4	29.6	13.2	6.1	47.5	16.2	5.9
Not in labor force	3.1	22.4	14.2	10.0	46.3	17.3	2.1
Race/ethnicity							
White	4.4	20.2	10.8	6.5	61.3	16.7	2.4
Black	3.2	20.8	12.9	6.3	47.8	23.1	2.5
Hispanic	5.6	22.0	10.7	7.7	57.3	15.5	2.9
Age							
17–24	3.1	24.1	7.8	6.2	54.7	13.4	1.4
25–34	2.8	17.1	12.2	6.9	63.2	14.7	2.9
35–44	4.3	19.9	11.4	6.2	61.1	18.1	2.2
45–54	6.2	23.5	10.5	6.9	57.9	18.7	3.1
55–64	4.5	21.3	10.7	5.6	54.4	22.5	1.7
65 and older	3.9	16.8	14.1	10.9	49.9	21.5	0.0

* Includes adults whose highest education level was grades 9–12 who had not received a high school diploma.

NOTE: Information on the type of provider of adult education activities was aggregated as follows: Elementary/secondary: elementary, junior high school, or high school; Postsecondary: 2-year community or junior college, 2-year vocational school, or 4-year college or university; Trade organization: private vocational, trade, business, hospital, or flight school, and adult learning center; Private: private community organization, church or religious organization, tutor, or private instructor; Business: business

or industry or professional association; and Government: federal, state, county, or local government, or public library. Percentages were based on individuals who participated in work-related activities only. Because individuals may take more than one work-related adult education course, details may add to more than 100.0.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1995 (Adult Education Component).

Table S13 **Standard errors for the text table in *Indicator 13***

Educational attainment and labor force status	1991 total	1995				
		Type of adult education activity				
		Total	Basic skills	Credential	Work-related	Personal development
Total	1.0	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.4
Educational attainment						
Grades 9–12	2.3	1.4	0.5	0.3	0.7	1.0
High school diploma or GED	1.1	0.8	0.1	0.3	0.7	0.6
Vocational/technical school	3.8	2.1	0.3	0.9	1.7	1.9
Some college	1.6	0.9	0.1	0.6	0.7	1.0
Associate degree	5.9	1.9	0.2	0.8	1.5	1.5
Bachelor's degree or higher	2.0	1.0	—	0.4	0.9	0.7
Labor force status						
Employed	1.0	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.5	0.6
Unemployed	3.1	1.9	0.7	0.8	1.2	2.3
Not in labor force	1.0	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.7

— Not available.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 and 1995 (Adult Education Component).